

## **THE WORD**

-Pablo Neruda

appearing here from: 'Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon' Translated by Stephen Mitchell

The word was born  
in the blood,  
it grew in the dark body, pulsing,  
and took flight with the lips and mouth.

Farther away and nearer,  
still, still it came  
from dead fathers and from wandering races,  
from territories that had become stone,  
that had tired of their poor tribes,  
because when grief set out on the road  
the people went and arrived  
and united new land and water  
to sow their word once again.  
And that's why the inheritance is this:  
this is the air that connects us  
with the buried man and with the dawn  
of new beings that haven't yet arisen.

Still the atmosphere trembles  
with the first word  
produced  
with panic and groaning.  
It emerged  
from the darkness  
and even now there is no thunder  
that thunders with the iron sound  
of that word,  
the first  
word uttered:  
perhaps it was just a whisper, a raindrop,  
but its cascade still falls and falls.

Later on, meaning fills the word.  
It stayed pregnant and was filled with lives,  
everything was births and sounds:  
affirmation, clarity, strength,  
negation, destruction, death:  
the name took on all the powers  
and combined existence with essence  
in its electric beauty.

Human word, syllable, flank

of long light and hard silver,  
hereditary goblet that receives  
the communications of the blood:  
it is here that silence was formed by  
the whole of the human word  
and not to speak is to die among beings:  
language extends out to the hair,  
the mouth speaks without moving the lips:  
suddenly the eyes are words.

I take the word and move  
through it, as if it were  
only a human form,  
its lines delight me and I sail  
in each resonance of language:  
I utter and I am  
and across the boundary of words,  
without speaking, I approach silence.

I drink to the word, raising  
a word or crystalline cup,  
in it I drink  
the wine of language  
or unfathomable water,

maternal source of all words,  
and cup and water and wine  
give rise to my song  
because the name is origin  
and green life: it is blood,  
the blood that expresses its substance,  
and thus its unrolling is prepared:  
words give crystal to the crystal,  
blood to the blood,  
and give life to life.

## **Poet's Obligation**

by Pablo Neruda

To whoever is not listening to the sea  
this Friday morning, to whoever is cooped up  
in house or office, factory or woman  
or street or mine or harsh prison cell;  
to him I come, and, without speaking or looking,  
I arrive and open the door of his prison,  
and a vibration starts up, vague and insistent,  
a great fragment of thunder sets in motion  
the rumble of the planet and the foam,  
the raucous rivers of the ocean flood,  
the star vibrates swiftly in its corona,  
and the sea is beating, dying and continuing.

So, drawn on by my destiny,  
I ceaselessly must listen to and keep  
the sea's lamenting in my awareness,  
I must feel the crash of the hard water  
and gather it up in a perpetual cup  
so that, wherever those in prison may be,  
wherever they suffer the autumn's castigation,

I may be there with an errant wave,  
I may move, passing through windows,  
and hearing me, eyes will glance upward  
saying "How can I reach the sea?"  
And I shall broadcast, saying nothing,  
the starry echoes of the wave,  
a breaking up of foam and quicksand,  
a rustling of salt withdrawing,  
the grey cry of the sea-birds on the coast.

So, through me, freedom and the sea  
will make their answer to the shuttered heart.

(Translated from the Spanish by Alastair Reid)

## ***Ode To Tomatoes***

PABLO NERUDA

The street  
filled with tomatoes,  
midday,  
summer,  
light is  
halved  
like  
a  
tomato,  
its juice  
runs  
through the streets.  
In December,  
unabated,  
the tomato  
invades  
the kitchen,  
it enters at lunchtime,  
takes  
its ease  
on countertops,  
among glasses,  
butter dishes,  
blue saltcellars.  
It sheds  
its own light,  
benign majesty.  
Unfortunately, we must  
murder it:  
the knife  
sinks  
into living flesh,  
red  
viscera  
a cool  
sun,  
profound,  
inexhaustible,  
populates the salads  
of Chile...

## **Ode To a Large Tuna in the Market**

PABLO NERUDA

Among the market greens,  
a bullet  
from the ocean  
depths,  
a swimming  
projectile,  
I saw you,  
dead.

All around you  
were lettuces,  
sea foam  
of the earth,  
carrots,  
grapes,  
but  
of the ocean  
truth,  
of the unknown,  
of the  
unfathomable  
shadow, the  
depths  
of the sea,  
the abyss,  
only you had survived,  
a pitch-black, varnished  
witness  
to deepest night.

## CURSE

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by Donald D. Walsh

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/19173>

Furrowed motherland, I swear that in your ashes  
you will be born like a flower of eternal water  
I swear that from your mouth of thirst will come to the air  
the petals of bread, the spilt  
inaugurated flower. Cursed,  
cursed, cursed be those who with an ax and serpent  
came to your earthly arena, cursed those  
who waited for this day to open the door  
of the dwelling to the moor and the bandit:  
What have you achieved? Bring, bring the lamp,  
see the soaked earth, see the blackened little bone  
eaten by the flames, the garment  
of murdered Spain.

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**from *THE BOOK OF QUESTIONS***

by Pablo Neruda  
Translated by William O'Daly  
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16006>

III.

Tell me, is the rose naked  
or is that her only dress?

Why do trees conceal  
the splendor of their roots?

Who hears the regrets  
of the thieving automobile?

Is there anything in the world sadder  
than a train standing in the rain?

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## LOVE FOR THIS BOOK

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by Clark Zlotchew and Dennis Maloney

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16755>

In these lonely regions I have been powerful  
in the same way as a cheerful tool  
or like untrammelled grass which lets loose its seed  
or like a dog rolling around in the dew.  
Matilde, time will pass wearing out and burning  
another skin, other fingernails, other eyes, and then  
the algae that lashed our wild rocks,  
the waves that unceasingly construct their own whiteness,  
all will be firm without us,  
all will be ready for the new days,  
which will not know our destiny.

What do we leave here but the lost cry  
of the seabird, in the sand of winter, in the gusts of wind  
that cut our faces and kept us  
erect in the light of purity,  
as in the heart of an illustrious star?

What do we leave, living like a nest  
of surly birds, alive, among the thickets  
or static, perched on the frigid cliffs?  
So then, if living was nothing more than anticipating  
the earth, this soil and its harshness,  
deliver me, my love, from not doing my duty, and help me  
return to my place beneath the hungry earth.

We asked the ocean for its rose,  
its open star, its bitter contact,  
and to the overburdened, to the fellow human being, to the wounded  
we gave the freedom gathered in the wind.  
It's late now. Perhaps  
it was only a long day the color of honey and blue,  
perhaps only a night, like the eyelid  
of a grave look that encompassed  
the measure of the sea that surrounded us,  
and in this territory we found only a kiss,  
only ungraspable love that will remain here  
wandering among the sea foam and roots.

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## NOTHING BUT DEATH

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by Robert Bly

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15797>

There are cemeteries that are lonely,  
graves full of bones that do not make a sound,  
the heart moving through a tunnel,  
in it darkness, darkness, darkness,  
like a shipwreck we die going into ourselves,  
as though we were drowning inside our hearts,  
as though we lived falling out of the skin into the soul.

And there are corpses,  
feet made of cold and sticky clay,  
death is inside the bones,  
like a barking where there are no dogs,  
coming out from bells somewhere, from graves somewhere,  
growing in the damp air like tears of rain.

Sometimes I see alone  
coffins under sail,  
embarking with the pale dead, with women that have dead hair,  
with bakers who are as white as angels,  
and pensive young girls married to notary publics,  
caskets sailing up the vertical river of the dead,  
the river of dark purple,  
moving upstream with sails filled out by the sound of death,  
filled by the sound of death which is silence.

Death arrives among all that sound  
like a shoe with no foot in it, like a suit with no man in it,  
comes and knocks, using a ring with no stone in it, with no  
finger in it,  
comes and shouts with no mouth, with no tongue, with no  
throat.

Nevertheless its steps can be heard  
and its clothing makes a hushed sound, like a tree.

I'm not sure, I understand only a little, I can hardly see,  
but it seems to me that its singing has the color of damp violets,  
of violets that are at home in the earth,  
because the face of death is green,  
and the look death gives is green,  
with the penetrating dampness of a violet leaf  
and the somber color of embittered winter.

But death also goes through the world dressed as a broom,  
lapping the floor, looking for dead bodies,  
death is inside the broom,  
the broom is the tongue of death looking for corpses,  
it is the needle of death looking for thread.

Death is inside the folding cots:  
it spends its life sleeping on the slow mattresses,  
in the black blankets, and suddenly breathes out:  
it blows out a mournful sound that swells the sheets,  
and the beds go sailing toward a port  
where death is waiting, dressed like an admiral.

By Pablo Neruda, translated and edited by Robert Bly, and published by Beacon Press in *Neruda & Vallejo: Selected Poems*. © 1993 by Robert Bly. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

## **STILL ANOTHER DAY: XVII/MEN**

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by William O'Daly

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16871>

The truth is in the prologue. Death to the romantic fool,  
to the expert in solitary confinement,  
I'm the same as the teacher from Colombia,  
the rotarian from Philadelphia, the merchant  
from Paysandu who save his silver  
to come here. We all arrive by different streets,  
by unequal languages, at Silence.

## THE SEPARATE ROSE: I

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by William O'Daly

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16870>

Today is that day, the day that carried  
a desperate light that since has died.  
Don't let the squatters know:  
let's keep it all between us,  
day, between your bell  
and my secret.

Today is dead winter in the forgotten land  
that comes to visit me, with a cross on the map  
and a volcano in the snow, to return to me,  
to return again the water  
fallen on the roof of my childhood.  
Today when the sun began with its shafts  
to tell the story, so clear, so old,  
the slanting rain fell like a sword,  
the rain my hard heart welcomes.

You, my love, still asleep in August,  
my queen, my woman, my vastness, my geography  
kiss of mud, the carbon-coated zither,  
you, vestment of my persistent song,  
today you are reborn again and with the sky's  
black water confuse me and compel me:  
I must renew my bones in your kingdom,  
I must still uncloud my earthly duties.

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## THE SONG OF DESPAIR

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by W. S. Merwin

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16807>

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.  
The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.  
It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.  
Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.  
From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.  
Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.  
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of a blind diver,  
turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.  
Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,  
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,  
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,  
I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed the infinite tenderness,  
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,  
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There were thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.  
There were grief and the ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me  
in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief was my desire of you!  
How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,  
still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,  
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force  
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.  
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was the voyage of my longing,  
and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,  
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.  
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still broke in currents.  
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,  
lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour  
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.  
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.  
Only the tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one.

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## UNITY

by Pablo Neruda

Translated by Clayton Eshleman

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16968>

There is something dense, united, settled in the depths,  
repeating its number, its identical sign.  
How it is noted that stones have touched time,  
in their refined matter there is an odor of age,  
of water brought by the sea, from salt and sleep.

I'm encircled by a single thing, a single movement:  
a mineral weight, a honeyed light  
cling to the sound of the word "noche":  
the tint of wheat, of ivory, of tears,  
things of leather, of wood, of wool,  
archaic, faded, uniform,  
collect around me like walls.

I work quietly, wheeling over myself,  
a crow over death, a crow in mourning.  
I mediate, isolated in the spread of seasons,  
centric, encircled by a silent geometry:  
a partial temperature drifts down from the sky,  
a distant empire of confused unities  
reunites encircling me.

## **The Me Bird**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

I am the Pablo Bird,  
bird of a single feather,  
a flier in the clear shadow  
and obscure clarity,  
my wings are unseen,  
my ears resound  
when I walk among the trees  
or beneath the tombstones  
like an unlucky umbrella  
or a naked sword,  
stretched like a bow  
or round like a grape,  
I fly on and on not knowing,  
wounded in the dark night,  
who is waiting for me,  
who does not want my song,  
who desires my death,  
who will not know I'm arriving  
and will not come to subdue me,  
to bleed me, to twist me,  
or to kiss my clothes,  
torn by the shrieking wind.

That's why I come and go,  
fly and don't fly but sing:  
I am the furious bird  
of the calm storm.

## If You Forget Me by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

I want you to know  
one thing.  
You know how this is:  
if I look  
at the crystal moon,  
at the red branch  
of the slow autumn at my window,  
if I touch  
near the fire  
the impalpable ash  
or the wrinkled body of the log,  
everything carries me to you,  
as if everything that exists,  
aromas, light, metals,  
were little boats  
that sail  
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,  
if little by little you stop loving me  
I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly  
you forget me  
do not look for me,  
for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,  
the wind of banners  
that passes through my life,  
and you decide  
to leave me at the shore  
of the heart where I have roots,  
remember  
that on that day,  
at that hour,  
I shall lift my arms  
and my roots will set off  
to seek another land.

But  
if each day,  
each hour,  
you feel that you are destined for me  
with implacable sweetness,  
if each day a flower  
climbs up to your lips to seek me,  
ah my love, ah my own,  
in me all that fire is repeated,  
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,  
my love feeds on your love, beloved,  
and as long as you live it will be in your arms  
without leaving mine.



## **In the night we shall go in**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

In the night we shall go in,  
we shall go in to steal  
a flowering, flowering branch.

We shall climb over the wall  
in the darkness of the alien garden,  
two shadows in the shadow.

Winter is not yet gone,  
and the apple tree appears  
suddenly changed into  
a fragment of cascade stars.

In the night we shall go in  
up to its trembling firmament,  
and your hands, your little hands  
and mine will steal the stars.

And silently to our house  
in the night and the shadow,  
perfume's silent step,  
and with starry feet,  
the clear body of spring.

## **The Weary One**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

The weary one, orphan  
of the masses, the self,  
the crushed one, the one made of concrete,  
the one without a country in crowded restaurants,  
he who wanted to go far away, always farther away,  
didn't know what to do there, whether he wanted  
or didn't want to leave or remain on the island,  
the hesitant one, the hybrid, entangled in himself,  
had no place here: the straight-angled stone,  
the infinite look of the granite prism,  
the circular solitude all banished him:  
he went somewhere else with his sorrows,  
he returned to the agony of his native land,  
to his indecisions, of winter and summer.

## **Tower of Light**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

O tower of light, sad beauty  
that magnified necklaces and statues in the sea,  
calcareous eye, insignia of the vast waters, cry  
of the mourning petrel, tooth of the sea, wife  
of the Oceaniac wind, O separate rose  
from the long stem of the trampled bush  
that the depths, converted into archipelago,  
O natural star, green diadem,  
alone in your lonesome dynasty,  
still unattainable, elusive, desolate  
like one drop, like one grape, like the sea.

## The Flight

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Hands shading eyes,  
I follow the high flight:  
honoring heaven, the bird  
traverses  
the transparency, without soiling the day.  
Winging westward, it climbs  
each step up to the naked blue:  
the entire sky is its tower,  
and the world is cleansed by its movement.

Though the violent bird  
seeks blood in the rose of space,  
its structure is  
arrow and flower in flight  
and in the light its wings  
are fused with air and purity.

O feathers destined  
not to tree, meadow, or combat,  
or to the atrocious ground  
or sweatshop,  
but to the conquest  
of a transparent fruit!

I celebrate the sky dance  
of gulls and petrels  
attired in snow  
as though I had  
a standing invitation:  
I participate  
in their velocity and repose,  
in the pause and haste of snow.

What flies in me is manifest  
in the errant equation of those wings.

O wind aside the black condor's  
iron flight in the mist!  
Whistling wind that transposed  
the hero's murderous scimitar:  
you receive the harsh flight's blow  
like a coat of armor plate,  
repeat its menace in the sky  
until all becomes blue again.

The flight of a dart,  
every swallow's mission,  
flight of the nightingale and its sonata,  
the cockatoo and its showy crest.  
Hummingbirds flying in a looking glass  
stir sparkling emeralds,  
and flying through the dew  
the partridge shakes  
the mint's green soul.

I, who learned to fly with every flight  
of pure professors  
in the woods, at sea, in the ravines,  
on my back in the sand,  
or in dreams,  
remained here, tied  
to the roots,  
to the magnetic mother, the earth,  
lying to myself  
and flying  
only within,  
alone and in the dark.

A plant dies and is buried again,  
man's feet return to the terrain,  
only wings evade death.

The world is a crystal sphere,  
if he does not fly man loses his way---  
cannot understand transparency.  
That is why I profess  
unconfined clarity  
and from the birds I learned  
passionate hope,  
the certainty and truth of flight.

## Magellanic Penguin

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Neither clown nor child nor black  
nor white but vertical  
and a questioning innocence  
dressed in night and snow:  
The mother smiles at the sailor,  
the fisherman at the astronaut,  
but the child does not smile  
when he looks at the bird child,  
and from the disorderly ocean  
the immaculate passenger  
emerges in snowy mourning.

I was without doubt the child bird  
there in the cold archipelagoes  
when it looked at me with its eyes,  
with its ancient ocean eyes:  
it had neither arms nor wings  
but hard little oars  
on its sides:  
it was as old as the salt;  
the age of moving water,  
and it looked at me from its age:  
since then I know I do not exist;  
I am a worm in the sand.

the reasons for my respect  
remained in the sand:  
the religious bird  
did not need to fly,  
did not need to sing,  
and through its form was visible  
its wild soul bled salt:  
as if a vein from the bitter sea  
had been broken.  
Penguin, static traveler,  
deliberate priest of the cold,  
I salute your vertical salt  
and envy your plumed pride.

## **The She Bird**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

With my little terrestrial bird,  
my rustic earthen jug,  
I break out singing  
the guitar's rain:  
alleged autumn arrives  
like a load of firewood,  
decanting the aroma  
that flew through the mountains,  
and grape by grape my kisses  
were joined to her bunch.

This proves that the afternoon  
accumulated sweetness  
like the amber process  
or the order of violets.

Come flying, passenger,  
let's fly with the coals,  
live or cold,  
with the disorderly darkness  
of the obscure and the ardent.

Let's enter the ash,  
let's move with the smoke,  
let's live by the fire.

In mid autumn  
we'll set the table  
over the grassy hillside,  
flying over Chillan  
with your guitar in your wings.

## **We are the clumsy passersby**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

We are the clumsy passersby, we push past each other with elbows,  
with feet, with trousers, with suitcases,  
we get off the train, the jet plane, the ship, we step down  
in our wrinkled suits and sinister hats.

We are all guilty, we are all sinners,  
we come from dead-end hotels or industrial peace,  
this might be our last clean shirt,  
we have misplaced our tie,  
yet even so, on the edge of panic, pompous,  
sons of bitches who move in the highest circles  
or quiet types who don't owe anything to anybody,  
we are one and the same, the same in time's eyes,  
or in solitude's: we are the poor devils  
who earn a living and a death working  
bureautragically or in the usual ways,  
sitting down or packed together in subway stations,  
boats, mines, research centers, jails,  
universities, breweries,  
(under our clothes the same thirsty skin),  
(the hair, the same hair, only in different colors).

## **I do not love you...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.  
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms  
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;  
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,  
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.  
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;  
so I love you because I know no other way

that this: where I does not exist, nor you,  
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,  
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.



## **In the center of the earth...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

In the center of the earth I will push aside  
the emeralds so that I can see you---  
you like an amanuensis, with a pen  
of water, copying the green sprigs of plants.  
What a world! What deep parsley!  
What a ship sailing through the sweetness!  
And you, maybe---and me, maybe---a topaz.  
There'll be no more dissensions in the bells.

There won't be anything but all the fresh air,  
apples carried on the wind,  
the succulent book in the woods:

and there where the carnations breathe, we will begin  
to make ourselves a clothing, something to last  
through the eternity of a victorious kiss.

## **Lost in the forest...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig  
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:  
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,  
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.  
Something from far off it seemed  
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,  
a shout muffled by huge autumns,  
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig  
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance  
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind  
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood---  
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

## **This beauty is soft...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

This beauty is soft -- as if music and wood,  
agate, cloth, wheat, peaches the light shines through  
had made an ephemeral statue.  
And now she sends her freshness out, against the waves.

The sea dabbles at those tanned feet, repeating  
their shape, just imprinted in the sand.  
And now she is the womanly fire of a rose,  
the only bubble the sun and the sea contend against.

Oh, may nothing touch you but the chilly salt!  
May not even love disturb that unbroken springtime!  
Beautiful woman, echo of the endless foam,

may your statuesque hips in the water make  
a new measure -- a swan, a lily -- as you float  
your form through that eternal crystal.

## **I crave your mouth...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair.  
Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets.  
Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day  
I hunt for the liquid measure of your steps.

I hunger for your sleek laugh,  
your hands the color of a savage harvest,  
hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails,  
I want to eat your skin like a whole almond.

I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your lovely body,  
the sovereign nose of your arrogant face,  
I want to eat the fleeting shade of your lashes,

and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight,  
hunting for you, for your hot heart,  
Like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.

## **Don't go far off...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Don't go far off, not even for a day, because --  
because -- I don't know how to say it: a day is long  
and I will be waiting for you, as in an empty station  
when the trains are parked off somewhere else, asleep.

Don't leave me, even for an hour, because  
then the little drops of anguish will all run together,  
the smoke that roams looking for a home will drift  
into me, choking my lost heart.

Oh, may your silhouette never dissolve on the beach;  
may your eyelids never flutter into the empty distance.  
Don't leave me for a second, my dearest,

because in that moment you'll have gone so far  
I'll wander maziily over all the earth, asking,  
Will you come back? Will you leave me here, dying?

## **Two happy lovers...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Two happy lovers make one bread,  
a single moon drop in the grass.  
Walking, they cast two shadows that flow together;  
waking, they leave one sun empty in their bed.

Of all the possible truths, they chose the day;  
they held it, not with ropes but with an aroma.  
They did not shred the peace; they did not shatter words;  
their happiness is a transparent tower.

The air and wine accompany the lovers.  
The night delights them with its joyous petals.  
They have a right to all the carnations.

Two happy lovers, without an ending, with no death,  
they are born, they die, many times while they live:  
they have the eternal life of the Natural.

## **You sing, and your voice peels...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

You sing, and your voice peels the husk  
of the day's grain, your song with the sun and sky,  
the pine trees speak with their green tongue:  
all the birds of the winter whistle.

The sea fills its cellar with footfalls,  
with bells, chains, whimpers,  
the tools and the metals jangle,  
wheels of the caravan creak.

But I hear only your voice, your voice  
soars with the zing and precision of an arrow,  
it drops with the gravity of rain,

your voice scatters the highest swords  
and returns with its cargo of violets:  
it accompanies me through the sky.

## **Maybe you'll remember...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Maybe you'll remember that razor-faced man  
who slipped out from the dark like a blade  
and -- before we realized -- knew what was there:  
he saw the smoke and concluded fire.

The pallid woman with black hair  
rose like a fish from the abyss,  
and the two of them built up a contraption,  
armed to the teeth, against love.

Man and woman, they felled mountains and gardens,  
they went down to the river, they scaled the walls,  
they hoisted their atrocious artillery up the hill.

Then love knew it was called love.  
And when I lifted my eyes to your name,  
suddenly your heart showed me my way.



## **You will remember...**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

You will remember that leaping stream  
where sweet aromas rose and trembled,  
and sometimes a bird, wearing water  
and slowness, its winter feathers.

You will remember those gifts from the earth:  
indelible scents, gold clay,  
weeds in the thicket and crazy roots,  
magical thorns like swords.

You'll remember the bouquet you picked,  
shadows and silent water,  
bouquet like a foam-covered stone.

That time was like never, and like always.  
So we go there, where nothing is waiting;  
we find everything waiting there.

## Ode to a Lemon

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Out of lemon flowers  
loosed  
on the moonlight, love's  
lashed and insatiable  
essences,  
sodden with fragrance,  
the lemon tree's yellow  
emerges,  
the lemons  
move down  
from the tree's planetarium

Delicate merchandise!  
the harbors are big with it-  
bazaars  
for the light and the  
barbarous gold.  
We open  
the halves  
of a miracle,  
and a clotting of acids  
brims into the starry  
divisions:  
creation's  
original juices,  
irreducible, changeless,  
alive:  
so the freshness lives on  
in a lemon,  
in the sweet-smelling house of the rind,  
the proportions, arcane and acerb.

Cutting the lemon  
the knife  
leaves a little cathedral:  
alcoves unguessed by the eye  
that open acidulous glass  
to the light; topazes  
riding the droplets,  
altars, aromatic  
facades.  
So, while the hand  
holds the cut of the lemon,  
half a world  
on a trencher,  
the gold of the universe  
wells  
to your touch:  
a cup yellow  
with miracles,  
a breast and a nipple  
perfuming the earth;  
a flashing made fruitage,  
the diminutive fire of a planet.

## Ode to Salt

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

This salt  
in the saltcellar  
I once saw in the salt mines.  
I know  
you won't  
believe me,  
but  
it sings,  
salt sings, the skin  
of the salt mines  
sings  
with a mouth smothered  
by the earth.  
I shivered in those solitudes  
when I heard  
the voice of  
the salt  
in the desert.  
Near Antofagasta  
the nitrous  
pampa  
resounds:  
a broken  
voice,  
a mournful  
song.

In its caves  
the salt moans, mountain  
of buried light,  
translucent cathedral,  
crystal of the sea, oblivion  
of the waves.

And then on every table  
in the world,  
salt,  
we see your piquant  
powder  
sprinkling  
vital light  
upon  
our food. Preserver  
of the ancient  
holds of ships,  
discoverer  
on  
the high seas,  
earliest  
sailor  
of the unknown, shifting  
byways of the foam.  
Dust of the sea, in you  
the tongue receives a kiss  
from ocean night:  
taste imparts to every seasoned  
dish your ocean essence;  
the smallest,  
miniature  
wave from the saltcellar  
reveals to us  
more than domestic whiteness;  
in it, we taste infinitude.

## House of Odes

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Writing

these  
odes  
in this  
year nineteen  
hundred and  
fifty-five,  
readying and tuning  
my demanding, murmuring lyre,  
I know who I am  
and where my song is going.  
I understand  
that the shopper for myths  
and mysteries  
may enter  
my wood  
and adobe  
house of odes,  
may despise  
the utensils,  
the portraits  
of father and mother and country  
on the walls,  
the simplicity  
of the bread  
and the saltcellar. But  
that's how it is in my house of odes.  
I deposed the dark monarchy,  
the useless flowing hair of dreams,  
I trod on the tail  
of the cerebral reptile,  
and set things  
-- water and fire -  
in harmony with man and earth.

I want everything  
to have  
a handle,  
I want everything to be  
a cup or a tool,  
I want people to enter a hardware  
store through the door of my odes.  
I work at cutting  
newly hewn boards,  
storing casks  
of honey,  
arranging  
horseshoes, harness,  
forks:  
I want everyone to enter here,  
let them ask questions,  
ask for anything they want.  
I am from the South, a Chilean,  
a sailor  
returned  
from the seas.  
I did not stay in the islands,  
a king.  
I did not stay ensconced  
in the land of dreams.  
I returned to labor simply  
beside others,  
for everyone.  
So that everyone  
may live here,  
I build my house  
with transparent  
odes.

## **Ode to Sadness**

by Pablo Neruda

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~nielle/neruda.htm>

Sadness, scarab  
with seven crippled feet,  
spiderweb egg,  
scramble-brained rat,  
bitch's skeleton:  
No entry here.  
Don't come in.  
Go away.  
Go back  
south with your umbrella,  
go back  
north with your serpent's teeth.  
A poet lives here.  
No sadness may  
cross this threshold.  
Through these windows  
comes the breath of the world,  
fresh red roses,  
flags embroidered with  
the victories of the people.  
No.  
No entry.  
Flap  
your bat's wings,  
I will trample the feathers  
that fall from your mantle,  
I will sweep the bits and pieces  
of your carcass to  
the four corners of the wind,  
I will wring your neck,  
I will stitch your eyelids shut,  
I will sew your shroud,  
sadness, and bury your rodent bones  
beneath the springtime of an apple tree.

## Ode To Broken Things

By Pablo Neruda, trans. Jodey Bateman

Things get broken  
at home  
like they were pushed  
by an invisible, deliberate smasher.  
It's not my hands  
or yours  
It wasn't the girls  
with their hard fingernails  
or the motion of the planet.  
It wasn't anything or anybody  
It wasn't the wind  
It wasn't the orange-colored noontime  
Or night over the earth  
It wasn't even the nose or the elbow  
Or the hips getting bigger  
or the ankle  
or the air.  
The plate broke, the lamp fell  
All the flower pots tumbled over  
one by one. That pot  
which overflowed with scarlet  
in the middle of October,  
it got tired from all the violets  
and another empty one  
rolled round and round and round  
all through winter  
until it was only the powder  
of a flowerpot,  
a broken memory, shining dust.

And that clock  
whose sound  
was  
the voice of our lives,  
the secret  
thread of our weeks,  
which released  
one by one, so many hours  
for honey and silence  
for so many births and jobs,  
that clock also  
fell  
and its delicate blue guts  
vibrated  
among the broken glass  
its wide heart  
unsprung.

Life goes on grinding up  
glass, wearing out clothes  
making fragments  
breaking down  
forms  
and what lasts through time  
is like an island on a ship in the sea,  
perishable  
surrounded by dangerous fragility  
by merciless waters and threats.

Let's put all our treasures together  
— the clocks, plates, cups cracked by the cold —  
into a sack and carry them  
to the sea  
and let our possessions sink  
into one alarming breaker  
that sounds like a river.  
May whatever breaks  
be reconstructed by the sea  
with the long labor of its tides.  
So many useless things  
which nobody broke  
but which got broken anyway.

**THE DICTATORS**

An odor has remained among the sugarcane:  
a mixture of blood and body, a penetrating  
petal that brings nausea.  
Between the coconut palms the graves are full  
of ruined bones, of speechless death-rattles.  
The delicate dictator is talking  
with top hats, gold braid, and collars.  
The tiny palace gleams like a watch  
and the rapid laughs with gloves on  
cross the corridors at times  
and join the dead voices  
and the blue mouths freshly buried.  
The weeping cannot be seen, like a plant  
whose seeds fall endlessly on the earth,  
whose large blind leaves grow even without light.  
Hatred has grown scale on scale,  
blow on blow, in the ghastly water of the swamp,  
with a snout full of ooze and silence



**THE QUESTION**

Love, a question  
has destroyed you.

I have come back to you  
from thorny uncertainty.

I want you straight as  
the sword or the road.

But you insist  
on keeping a nook  
of shadow that I do not want.

My love,  
understand me,  
I love all of you,  
from eyes to feet, to toenails,  
inside,  
all the brightness, which you kept.

It is I, my love,  
who knocks at your door.  
It is not the ghost, it is not  
the one who once stopped  
at your window.  
I knock down the door:  
I enter your life:  
I come to live in your soul:  
you cannot cope with me.

You must open door to door,  
you must obey me,  
you must open your eyes  
so that I may search in them,  
you must see how I walk  
with heavy steps  
along all the roads  
that, blind, were waiting for me.

Do not fear,  
I am yours,  
but  
I am not the passenger or the beggar,  
I am your master,  
the one you were waiting for,  
and now I enter  
your life,  
no more to leave it,  
love, love, love,  
but to stay.

**THE LIGHT WRAPS YOU**

The light wraps you in its mortal flame.  
Abstracted pale mourner, standing that way  
against the old propellers of the twilight  
that revolves around you.

Speechless, my friend,  
alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead  
and filled with the lives of fire,  
pure heir of the ruined day.

A bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garment.  
The great roots of night  
grow suddenly from your soul,  
and the things that hide in you come out again  
so that a blue and palled people  
your newly born, takes nourishment.

Oh magnificent and fecund and magnetic slave  
of the circle that moves in turn through black and gold:  
rise, lead and possess a creation  
so rich in life that its flowers perish  
and it is full of sadness.

**WALKING AROUND**

It so happens I am sick of being a man.  
 And it happens that I walk into tailor shops and movie  
 houses  
 dried up, waterproof, like a swan made of felt  
 steering my way in a water of wombs and ashes.

The smell of barbershops makes me break into hoarse  
 sobs.  
 The only thing I want is to lie still like stones or wool.  
 The only thing I want is to see no more stores, no gardens,  
 no more goods, no spectacles, no elevators.

It so happens that I am sick of my feet and my nails  
 and my hair and my shadow.  
 It so happens I am sick of being a man.

Still it would be marvelous  
 to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,  
 or kill a nun with a blow on the ear.  
 It would be great  
 to go through the streets with a green knife  
 letting out yells until I died of the cold.

I don't want to go on being a root in the dark,  
 insecure, stretched out, shivering with sleep,  
 going on down, into the moist guts of the earth,  
 taking in and thinking, eating every day.

I don't want so much misery.  
 I don't want to go on as a root and a tomb,  
 alone under the ground, a warehouse with corpses,  
 half frozen, dying of grief.

That's why Monday, when it sees me coming  
 with my convict face, blazes up like gasoline,  
 and it howls on its way like a wounded wheel,  
 and leaves tracks full of warm blood leading toward the  
 night.

And it pushes me into certain corners, into some moist

houses,  
into hospitals where the bones fly out the window,  
into shoe shops that smell like vinegar,  
and certain streets hideous as cracks in the skin.

There are sulphur-colored birds, and hideous intestines  
hanging over the doors of houses that I hate,  
and there are false teeth forgotten in a coffeepot,  
there are mirrors  
that ought to have wept from shame and terror,  
there are umbrellas everywhere, and venoms, and umbilical  
cords.

I stroll along serenely, with my eyes, my shoes,  
my rage, forgetting everything,  
I walk by, going through office buildings and orthopedic  
shops,  
and courtyards with washing hanging from the line:  
underwear, towels and shirts from which slow  
dirty tears are falling.

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BLY

**WE ARE MANY**

Of the many men whom I am, whom we are,  
 I cannot settle on a single one.  
 They are lost to me under the cover of clothing  
 They have departed for another city.

When everything seems to be set  
 to show me off as a man of intelligence,  
 the fool I keep concealed on my person  
 takes over my talk and occupies my mouth.

On other occasions, I am dozing in the midst  
 of people of some distinction,  
 and when I summon my courageous self,  
 a coward completely unknown to me  
 swaddles my poor skeleton  
 in a thousand tiny reservations.

When a stately home bursts into flames,  
 instead of the fireman I summon,  
 an arsonist bursts on the scene,  
 and he is I. There is nothing I can do.  
 What must I do to distinguish myself?  
 How can I put myself together?

All the books I read  
 lionize dazzling hero figures,  
 brimming with self-assurance.  
 I die with envy of them;  
 and, in films where bullets fly on the wind,  
 I am left in envy of the cowboys,  
 left admiring even the horses.

But when I call upon my DASHING BEING,  
 out comes the same OLD LAZY SELF,  
 and so I never know just WHO I AM,  
 nor how many I am, nor WHO WE WILL BE BEING.  
 I would like to be able to touch a bell  
 and call up my real self, the truly me,  
 because if I really need my proper self,

I must not allow myself to disappear.

While I am writing, I am far away;  
and when I come back, I have already left.  
I should like to see if the same thing happens  
to other people as it does to me,  
to see if as many people are as I am,  
and if they seem the same way to themselves.  
When this problem has been thoroughly explored,  
I am going to school myself so well in things  
that, when I try to explain my problems,  
I shall speak, not of self, but of geography.

**YOUR LAUGHTER**

Take bread away from me, if you wish,  
take air away, but  
do not take from me your laughter.

Do not take away the rose,  
the lance flower that you pluck,  
the water that suddenly  
bursts forth in joy,  
the sudden wave  
of silver born in you.

My struggle is harsh and I come  
back  
with eyes tired  
at times from having seen  
the unchanging earth,  
but when your laughter enters  
it rises to the sky seeking me  
and it opens for me all  
the doors of life.

My love, in the darkest  
hour your laughter  
opens, and if suddenly  
you see my blood staining  
the stones of the street,

laugh, because your laughter  
will be for my hands  
like a fresh sword.

Next to the sea in the autumn,  
your laughter must raise  
its foamy cascade,  
and in the spring, love,  
I want your laughter like  
the flower I was waiting for,  
the blue flower, the rose  
of my echoing country.

Laugh at the night,  
at the day, at the moon,  
laugh at the twisted  
streets of the island,  
laugh at this clumsy  
boy who loves you,  
but when I open  
my eyes and close them,  
when my steps go,  
when my steps return,  
deny me bread, air,  
light, spring,  
but never your laughter  
for I would die.

**LOVE**

What's wrong with you, with us,  
what's happening to us?  
Ah our love is a harsh cord  
that binds us wounding us  
and if we want  
to leave our wound,  
to separate,  
it makes a new knot for us and condemns us  
to drain our blood and burn together.

What's wrong with you? I look at you  
and I find nothing in you but two eyes  
like all eyes, a mouth  
lost among a thousand mouths that I have kissed, more beautiful,  
a body just like those that have slipped  
beneath my body without leaving any memory.

And how empty you went through the world  
like a wheat-colored jar  
without air, without sound, without substance!  
I vainly sought in you  
depth for my arms  
that dig, without cease, beneath the earth:  
beneath your skin, beneath your eyes,  
nothing,  
beneath your double breast scarcely  
raised  
a current of crystalline order  
that does not know why it flows singing.  
Why, why, why,  
my love, why?



**ODE TO THE BOOK**

When I close a book  
 I open life.  
 I hear  
 faltering cries  
 among harbours.  
 Copper ignots  
 slide down sand-pits  
 to Tocopilla.  
 Night time.  
 Among the islands  
 our ocean  
 throbs with fish,  
 touches the feet, the thighs,  
 the chalk ribs  
 of my country.  
 The whole of night  
 clings to its shores, by dawn  
 it wakes up singing  
 as if it had excited a guitar.

The ocean's surge is calling.  
 The wind  
 calls me  
 and Rodriguez calls,  
 and Jose Antonio--  
 I got a telegram  
 from the "Mine" Union  
 and the one I love  
 (whose name I won't let out)  
 expects me in Bucalemu.

No book has been able  
 to wrap me in paper,  
 to fill me up  
 with typography,  
 with heavenly imprints  
 or was ever able  
 to bind my eyes,  
 I come out of books to people orchards  
 with the hoarse family of my song,

to work the burning metals  
 or to eat smoked beef  
 by mountain firesides.  
 I love adventurous  
 books,  
 books of forest or snow,  
 depth or sky  
 but hate  
 the spider book  
 in which thought  
 has laid poisonous wires  
 to trap the juvenile  
 and circling fly.  
 Book, let me go.  
 I won't go clothed  
 in volumes,  
 I don't come out  
 of collected works,  
 my poems  
 have not eaten poems--  
 they devour  
 exciting happenings,  
 feed on rough weather,  
 and dig their food  
 out of earth and men.  
 I'm on my way  
 with dust in my shoes  
 free of mythology:  
 send books back to their shelves,  
 I'm going down into the streets.  
 I learned about life  
 from life itself,  
 love I learned in a single kiss  
 and could teach no one anything  
 except that I have lived  
 with something in common among  
 men,  
 when fighting with them,  
 when saying all their say in my song.

**AND BECAUSE LOVE BATTLES**

And because love battles  
not only in its burning agricultures  
but also in the mouth of men and women,  
I will finish off by taking the path away  
to those who between my chest and your  
fragrance  
want to interpose their obscure plant.

About me, nothing worse  
they will tell you, my love,  
than what I told you.

I lived in the prairies  
before I got to know you  
and I did not wait love but I was  
laying in wait for and I jumped on the rose.

What more can they tell you?  
I am neither good nor bad but a man,  
and they will then associate the danger  
of my life, which you know  
and which with your passion you shared.

And good, this danger  
is danger of love, of complete love  
for all life,  
for all lives,  
and if this love brings us  
the death and the prisons,  
I am sure that your big eyes,  
as when I kiss them,  
will then close with pride,  
into double pride, love,  
with your pride and my pride.

But to my ears they will come before  
to wear down the tour  
of the sweet and hard love which binds us,  
and they will say: "The one  
you love,  
is not a woman for you,  
Why do you love her? I think  
you could find one more beautiful,  
more serious, more deep,  
more other, you understand me, look how  
she's light,  
and what a head she has,

and look at how she dresses,  
and etcetera and etcetera".

And I in these lines say:  
Like this I want you, love,  
love, Like this I love you,  
as you dress  
and how your hair lifts up  
and how your mouth smiles,  
light as the water  
of the spring upon the pure stones,  
Like this I love you, beloved.

To bread I do not ask to teach me  
but only not to lack during every day of life.  
I don't know anything about light, from  
where  
it comes nor where it goes,  
I only want the light to light up,  
I do not ask to the night  
explanations,  
I wait for it and it envelops me,  
And so you, bread and light  
And shadow are.

You came to my life  
with what you were bringing,  
made  
of light and bread and shadow I expected  
you,  
and Like this I need you,  
Like this I love you,  
and to those who want to hear tomorrow  
that which I will not tell them, let them read  
it here,  
and let them back off today because it is  
early  
for these arguments.

Tomorrow we will only give them  
a leaf of the tree of our love, a leaf  
which will fall on the earth  
like if it had been made by our lips  
like a kiss which falls  
from our invincible heights  
to show the fire and the tenderness  
of a true love.

**CANTO XII FROM THE HEIGHTS OF MACCHU****PICCHU**

Arise to birth with me, my brother.  
 Give me your hand out of the depths  
 sown by your sorrows.  
 You will not return from these stone fastnesses.  
 You will not emerge from subterranean time.  
 Your rasping voice will not come back,  
 nor your pierced eyes rise from their sockets.

Look at me from the depths of the earth,  
 tiller of fields, weaver, reticent shepherd,  
 groom of totemic guanacos,  
 mason high on your treacherous scaffolding,  
 iceman of Andean tears,  
 jeweler with crushed fingers,  
 farmer anxious among his seedlings,  
 potter wasted among his clays--  
 bring to the cup of this new life  
 your ancient buried sorrows.  
 Show me your blood and your furrow;  
 say to me: here I was scourged  
 because a gem was dull or because the earth  
 failed to give up in time its tithe of corn or stone.  
 Point out to me the rock on which you stumbled,  
 the wood they used to crucify your body.  
 Strike the old flints  
 to kindle ancient lamps, light up the whips  
 glued to your wounds throughout the centuries  
 and light the axes gleaming with your blood.

I come to speak for your dead mouths.

Throughout the earth  
 let dead lips congregate,  
 out of the depths spin this long night to me  
 as if I rode at anchor here with you.

And tell me everything, tell chain by chain,  
 and link by link, and step by step;  
 sharpen the knives you kept hidden away,  
 thrust them into my breast, into my hands,  
 like a torrent of sunbursts,  
 an Amazon of buried jaguars,  
 and leave me cry: hours, days and years,  
 blind ages, stellar centuries.

And give me silence, give me water, hope.

Give me the struggle, the iron, the volcanoes.

Let bodies cling like magnets to my body.

Come quickly to my veins and to my mouth.

Speak through my speech, and through my blood.

**CLENCHED SOUL**

We have lost even this twilight.  
No one saw us this evening hand in hand  
while the blue night dropped on the world.

I have seen from my window  
the fiesta of sunset in the distant mountain  
tops.

Sometimes a piece of sun  
burned like a coin in my hand.

I remembered you with my soul clenched  
in that sadness of mine that you know.

Where were you then?  
Who else was there?  
Saying what?  
Why will the whole of love come on me  
suddenly  
when I am sad and feel you are far away?

The book fell that always closed at twilight  
and my blue sweater rolled like a hurt dog at  
my feet.

Always, always you recede through the  
evenings  
toward the twilight erasing statues.

**ENIGMAS**

You've asked me what the lobster is weaving  
there with  
his golden feet?

I reply, the ocean knows this.

You say, what is the ascidia waiting for in its  
transparent

bell? What is it waiting for?

I tell you it is waiting for time, like you.

You ask me whom the *Macrocystis* alga hugs  
in its arms?

Study, study it, at a certain hour, in a certain  
sea I know.

You question me about the wicked tusk of  
the narwhal,

and I reply by describing

how the sea unicorn with the harpoon in it  
dies.

You enquire about the kingfisher's feathers,  
which tremble in the pure springs of the  
southern tides?

Or you've found in the cards a new question  
touching on

the crystal architecture

of the sea anemone, and you'll deal that to  
me now?

You want to understand the electric nature  
of the ocean  
spines?

The armored stalactite that breaks as it  
walks?

The hook of the angler fish, the music  
stretched out

in the deep places like a thread in the water?

I want to tell you the ocean knows this, that  
life in its

jewel boxes

is endless as the sand, impossible to count,  
pure,

and among the blood-colored grapes time  
has made the  
petal  
hard and shiny, made the jellyfish full of light  
and untied its knot, letting its musical  
threads fall  
from a horn of plenty made of infinite  
mother-of-pearl.

I am nothing but the empty net which has  
gone on ahead

of human eyes, dead in those darknesses,  
of fingers accustomed to the triangle,

longitudes

on the timid globe of an orange.

I walked around as you do, investigating  
the endless star,

and in my net, during the night, I woke up  
naked,

the only thing caught, a fish trapped inside  
the wind.

Translated by Robert Bly

**IN MY SKY AT TWILIGHT**

In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud  
and your form and colour are the way I love  
them.

You are mine, mine, woman with sweet lips  
and in your life my infinite dreams live.

The lamp of my soul dyes your feet,  
the sour wine is sweeter on your lips,  
oh reaper of my evening song,  
how solitary dreams believe you to be mine!

You are mine, mine, I go shouting it to the  
afternoon's  
wind, and the wind hauls on my widowed  
voice.  
Huntress of the depth of my eyes, your  
plunder  
stills your nocturnal regard as though it were  
water.

You are taken in the net of my music, my  
love,  
and my nets of music are wide as the sky.  
My soul is born on the shore of your eyes of  
mourning.  
In your eyes of mourning the land of dreams  
begin.